

HOLIDAY HACKS



Left: Moxsy Sydney Airport's Quad Bunks room has two king single bunk beds. Above: The hotel's lounge.

Booking for a family of five

Larger families are finding more room to move at hotels, Tara Wells discovers

Swipe your key at most hotels and the door opens to a bedroom built for two. Add a convertible sofa, or perhaps a second king bed, and that's the whole family sorted, right? After all, the birth rate is at an all-time low of 1.5 children per woman, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Many still have more than two kids, though, often including the nearly 350,000 Australian blended or step-families who've scored more children with repartnering. With typical hotel rooms, families bigger than four people are left standing in the corridor.

Not so at the Moxsy Sydney Airport, which opened in mid-2023. My family of five's interconnecting rooms feel exceptional rather than the exception: a queen bed for the grown-ups and two sets of king single bunks for the kiddos. Despite a common area filled with Skee-Ball, giant Jenga and a ping-pong table, this is not a family hotel – and we're not the only guests playing Battleship.

Moxsy's marketing director, Ari Foo, says while the family rooms were designed for people with more than two children, the bunks often do double duty for friends travelling together. "Moxsy is all about the young and young at heart with a fun element," says Foo. It's a rarity, especially in airport hotels typically designed for solo or business travellers.

Travel agent Rebecca Mason is an expert in accommodation for sizeable families. A mother of six, she founded Mr Chocolate's Travel after other agents didn't understand her family's needs. "Before I started, I wrote to every hotel in Anaheim and asked which ones catered to seven or more," she says. Eight years later, she gives special mention to Anaheim's Sheraton Park Hotel for being the first she's come across to offer three interconnecting rooms.

Her first tip for others facing a similar challenge: know the difference between "adjoining" rooms – neighbours in the same

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public hallway – and "interconnecting" – rooms connected by a door. The second tip is to book early as suitable rooms are often limited.

For many, bed configuration is important and every family is different. "We're happy with two rooms of two queen beds," says Mason, "but a lot of families say their child couldn't deal with their sibling's kicking. They need their own space." Contact the hotel or use a travel agent to confirm room set-up.

The easiest way for families to save a motza is to look for inclusions, like breakfast. Holiday Inn Express is known for its free

breakfast buffet but holding loyalty program status can earn the same perks elsewhere. Booking directly or via a premium hotel platform, like Luxury Escapes, can also get the family fed for the price of a room. Flying somewhere? Seek out airport hotels with free transfers.

In Australia, hotels often lag behind in family offerings. Joy – or simply enough beds – is more likely to be found with home rentals, serviced apartments (try Quest or Peppers) and caravan parks. Unfortunately, parks are no longer the cheap-as-chips holiday of days gone by. Even unpowered tent sites can quickly equal the price of a hotel room when paying for each head of the family Hydra. Rather, families stay because parks understand their needs: self-catering, laundry facilities and kids' activities.

Mason recalls the relief she felt two decades ago when first discovering BIG4 Cairns Coconut Resort had a three-bedroom cabin. Rare then but increasingly common now, multi-bedroom cabins offer enough space for intergenerational holidays, a trend that larger families can capitalise on.

Some of Mason's children are now adults so the pressure is off – except that a new bundle arrived a few weeks ago: "I now have a grandson so it's all going to start again."

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